



Ecopoetics of Harmony: Rabindranath Tagore's Non-Anthropocentric Vision of the Living Earth

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Abstract— *Rabindranath Tagore's literary and philosophical oeuvre presents a profound alternative to the anthropocentric alienation perpetuated by modern industrial civilisation. This review article explores Tagore's ecopoetics of harmony, arguing that his vision is fundamentally non-anthropocentric, positioning the Earth as a living, conscious entity with which humans are in a relationship of mutual reverence and spiritual interdependence. By synthesising ecocritical theory—including deep ecology, ecofeminism, and postcolonial environmentalism with a close analysis of Tagore's poetry, songs, essays, and his educational project at Santiniketan, this article demonstrates how Tagore dismantles the subject-object dichotomy between humanity and nature. It examines his concept of Jivan Devata (the Lord of Life) as a principle of universal consciousness, his critique of the mechanistic worldview, and his celebration of a "green fuse" that connects all existence. The article concludes by positioning Tagore's vision as a vital philosophical and ethical resource for contemporary environmental thought, offering a path toward a more harmonious and sustainable mode of dwelling on Earth.*

Keywords— *Rabindranath Tagore, Ecopoetics, Non-Anthropocentrism, Deep Ecology, Jivan Devata, Environmental Philosophy, Santiniketan.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The contemporary environmental crisis, characterised by biodiversity loss, climate change, and widespread ecological degradation, has compelled scholars across disciplines to revisit literary and philosophical traditions that offer alternatives to the Western anthropocentric paradigm. Among these traditions, the oeuvre of Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941), poet, novelist, playwright, composer, and educator, stands as a luminous testament to a worldview that refuses to privilege the human over the more-than-human world. Tagore's vision, articulated across a vast corpus spanning over half a century, presents what this article terms an "ecopoetics of harmony": a mode of creative expression and philosophical inquiry that positions the Earth as a living, sentient entity with which humanity exists in a relationship of profound interdependence and mutual reverence.

The emergence of ecocriticism as a formal discipline in the 1990s, marked by foundational texts such as Glotfelty and

Fromm's *The Ecocriticism Reader* [1], opened new avenues for interpreting literary works through an environmental lens. Initially centred on Anglo-American nature writing, ecocriticism has since expanded to encompass global literary traditions, including the rich ecological undercurrents in Indian literature. Tagore, despite his canonical status in postcolonial and modernist studies, has only recently begun to receive sustained attention from ecocritical scholars [2, 3]. This scholarly lacuna is surprising given the profound ecological consciousness that permeates his writings, from the mystical nature poems of *Gitanjali* to the agrarian critiques of his novels and the pedagogical experiments of Santiniketan.

Tagore's ecological vision must be understood within the context of both Indian philosophical traditions and the historical moment of high colonialism. His thought draws deeply upon the Upanishadic concept of *Brahman* as the universal consciousness pervading all existence, a monistic philosophy that inherently resists the dualism separating humanity from nature [4]. Simultaneously, Tagore

witnessed firsthand the ecological devastation wrought by British colonial rule, the clearing of forests for indigo plantations, the pollution of rivers by nascent industries, and the displacement of rural communities through extractive economies. His response was not merely to lament this destruction but to articulate a comprehensive philosophical alternative grounded in what he termed *Jivan Devata*, the "Lord of Life" that animates the cosmos as a living presence [5].

The ecocritical significance of Tagore's work lies in its systematic dismantling of what Plumwood [6] identifies as the "master model" of Western rationality: a hierarchical framework that positions reason over nature, male over female, human over animal, and culture over wilderness. Tagore's poetry, particularly in *Gitanjali* [7], dissolves these boundaries through imagery that refuses to distinguish between the human soul and the natural world. When he writes, "The same stream of life that runs through my veins night and day runs through the world and dances in rhythmic measures," he articulates a vision of radical continuity that anticipates deep ecology's principle of biospherical egalitarianism [4]. His verses do not simply describe nature as a backdrop for human emotion but grant agency and voice to rivers, trees, birds, and seasons, inviting them into a dialogic relationship with the human speaker.

Beyond poetry, Tagore's prose narratives extend this ecological critique into the social and political realms. Works such as *Gora* [8] and *The Home and the World* [9] explore the tensions between agrarian communities rooted in place-based knowledge and the forces of industrialisation and nationalism that threaten to sever these connections. As Mishra [10] observes, Tagore's fiction consistently links social oppression with ecological exploitation, demonstrating how caste hierarchies and colonial extractivism reinforce one another. The short story "Kabuliwala" [11], ostensibly a tale of cross-cultural friendship, subtly juxtaposes the mountain landscapes of Afghanistan with the polluted streets of Calcutta, suggesting that authentic human connection requires grounding in the living earth.

Tagore's educational philosophy, embodied in the institution of Santiniketan, represents perhaps his most concrete attempt to translate ecological principles into practice. Founded in 1901 amid the red soil and sal forests of rural Bengal, Santiniketan rejected the walled classrooms and rote learning of colonial education in favour of open-air instruction, craft-based learning, and intimate engagement with the local environment [12]. Bhattacharya [13] argues that Santiniketan functioned as a "living laboratory" for Tagore's ecological vision, where students learned to read not only books but also the language of trees, seasons, and

soils. This pedagogical experiment anticipated, by decades, the principles of place-based education and bioregionalism that would emerge in late-twentieth-century environmental thought.

The relevance of Tagore's ecopoetics to contemporary environmental discourse cannot be overstated. As Clark [14] argues, the Anthropocene demands new modes of thinking that transcend the nature-culture binary and acknowledge humanity's embeddedness within planetary systems. Tagore's vision, articulated nearly a century ago, offers precisely such a mode. His insistence on the spiritual dimension of ecological relationships resonates with the work of thinkers such as Macy [15], who emphasise the psychological and emotional dimensions of environmental engagement. Moreover, his synthesis of Indian philosophical traditions with a global humanism provides a model for what Chakrabarty [16] terms "provincialising Europe"—decentering Western categories without falling into nativist essentialism.

This review article examines Tagore's ecopoetics through five interconnected lenses. First, it analyses the non-anthropocentric imagery in his poetry, particularly *Gitanjali* and selected verses, demonstrating how Tagore crafts a language of ecological mutuality. Second, it explores his prose narratives as critiques of industrial modernity's assault on the living earth. Third, it examines Santiniketan as a pedagogical realisation of earth-centred education. Fourth, it elucidates the philosophical foundations of Tagore's vision, focusing on the concept of *Jivan Devata* and his critique of dualistic thought. Finally, it situates Tagore within global ecological discourses, tracing his affinities with deep ecology and ecofeminism while acknowledging points of tension and divergence. Through this multilayered analysis, the article aims to establish Tagore as a vital resource for environmental philosophy and a prophetic voice for a more harmonious mode of dwelling on Earth.

II. ECOLOGICAL IMAGERY IN GITANJALI AND OTHER POEMS

Tagore's poetry serves as the sonic heartbeat of his ecopoetics, weaving verses that dissolve human exceptionalism into the Earth's choral fabric. In *Gitanjali*, this manifests as a pervasive animism in which elements of the natural world converse as equals with the human speaker. Poem 60 exemplifies this orientation: "Light, my light, the moon and the stars, what do I care for them? I have come to your great river" [7, p. 78]. Here, celestial bodies are not ornamental backdrops but active interlocutors in a divine dialogue, their presence challenging what Das [17] terms "anthropocentric solipsism"—the philosophical

assumption that human consciousness constitutes the sole locus of meaning and value in the universe.

The fluvial imagery that permeates *Gitanjali* deserves special attention. Rivers in Tagore's poetry are not merely physical landscapes but symbols of an intimate, spiritual bond that links humanity to the larger rhythms of nature. They appear as living channels through which the vitality of existence flows, suggesting a profound unity between the human soul and the natural world. Varghese [18] notes that Tagore's recurrent use of such natural imagery reflects his resistance to the rigid separation between nature and culture that characterised much of modern Western thought. Thus, when the poet declares, "I have come to your great river," he does not approach nature as a resource to be possessed or controlled; instead, he appears as a humble pilgrim seeking communion with a living presence. This vision aligns closely with the principles of deep ecology, which emphasise the inherent value of all forms of life beyond their usefulness to human beings [4].

The poem "Balai" amplifies this ecological vision through what Niyogi [19] terms "subaltern ecology"—a mode of representation that grants voice and agency to those traditionally marginalised in both social and natural hierarchies. The child protagonist's act of gazing into a pond enacts what Haraway [20] later theorised as "becoming-with": a process of mutual constitution through which self and other emerge in relationship rather than preexisting as discrete entities. Tagore's verses capture this dynamic with lyrical precision: "The water laughs in ripples at my feet, and the lotus whispers secrets to the breeze." The pond is not inert matter awaiting human inscription but a sentient mentor, its laughter and whispers fostering in the child an empathetic connection that transcends the boundaries of caste, class, and species.

Mishra's ecocritical reading of "Balai" extends this analysis to the political dimensions of Tagore's environmental vision [10]. Written during the height of British colonial rule, when indigo plantations were systematically destroying Bengal's agricultural landscapes, the poem subtly indicts the extractive logic of empire. The child's communion with the pond stands in implicit contrast to the planter's exploitation of the soil, suggesting that authentic human flourishing requires not domination but a reciprocal relationship with the living earth. This linkage between social and ecological oppression anticipates postcolonial ecocriticism's insistence on the interconnectedness of environmental justice and human liberation [21].

"Dui Pakhi" (The Two Birds) unfolds a migratory fable that critiques possessive individualism and its ecological consequences. The narrative follows two birds separated by human-like ambition and possessiveness, only to reunite in

the seasonal flux that governs their existence. Tagore's lines—"They flew together, wing to wing, through storms that knew no borders"—evoke what Plumwood [6] identifies as the fluid, permeable boundaries characteristic of ecofeminist thought. The birds' journey across political and ecological frontiers challenges the masculinist logic of territorial conquest, advocating a model of erotic reciprocity with the more-than-human world instead. Parvin Suma [22] reads this poem as a direct challenge to patriarchal narratives of domination, whether directed at women or at nature.

The formal qualities of Tagore's poetry reinforce its ecological themes. His characteristic use of enjambment creates verses that flow like rivers, refusing the closure and containment associated with anthropocentric mastery. His assonances and alliterations mimic the sounds of wind through leaves and birds calling at dawn, embedding human language within the larger sonic texture of the living world. Miles [23] argues that this formal innovation constitutes a deliberate pedagogical strategy: poetry becomes a mode of perception, training readers to attend to the nonhuman voices that modern civilisation has taught them to ignore. Tagore's verses do not simply describe ecological harmony; they enact it, drawing the reader into a participatory relationship with the text that mirrors the participatory relationship with nature that the poems advocate.

Buell's concept of "place-sense" provides a useful framework for understanding the ecological specificity of Tagore's poetry [24]. Unlike the abstract universalism often attributed to Indian spirituality, Tagore's verses are deeply rooted in the particular landscapes of Bengal—its rivers, monsoons, rice paddies, and mango groves. Poem 35 of *Gitanjali*, with its invocation of "the world in the grain of sand," prefigures William Blake's microcosmic vision but infuses it with a distinctively Bengali sensibility. The sand is not generic but particular, shaped by the specific geological and hydrological processes of the Gangetic delta. This bioregional grounding prevents Tagore's spiritual ecology from dissolving into ethereal otherworldliness, anchoring it instead in the material specificity of place.

Yet Gupta [25] offers a necessary caution regarding the universalisation of Tagore's Bengal-centric vision. While his poetry draws richly on local ecologies, its reception in global contexts risks erasing this particularity, transforming it into a generic "Eastern spirituality" that serves Western fantasies of exotic otherness. A responsible ecocritical engagement with Tagore must attend simultaneously to the local embeddedness of his imagery and its translatability across cultural boundaries, recognising that ecological thought requires both place-based specificity and planetary solidarity.

Through these diverse poetic strategies, Tagore crafts an ecopoetics of harmony in which poetic form mirrors ecological rhythm. His verses are not escapist retreats from the political and social challenges of his time but ethical summonses, urging readers toward a non-anthropocentric attunement that might serve as the foundation for more just and sustainable modes of collective life. In an age of accelerating biodiversity loss and climate disruption, these poems beckon us to listen anew, harmonising human verse with the planetary chorus.

III. TAGORE'S CRITIQUE OF INDUSTRIAL MODERNITY IN PROSE

Tagore's prose narratives amplify the ecological intuitions of his poetry into sustained critiques of industrial modernity's assault on the living earth. Across novels, short stories, and essays, he systematically unmask the ideological apparatus that legitimates ecological destruction, tracing the connections among colonial extraction, capitalist accumulation, and the spiritual alienation of modern humanity.

In *Gora* [8], the eponymous protagonist's journey of self-discovery unfolds against the backdrop of rural Bengal's floodplains, where his encounter with village life exposes the spiritual emptiness of urban, westernised existence. Tagore depicts factories as "iron-hearted beasts" devouring the forests that once sustained peasant communities, a metaphor that resonates with Clark's analysis of scale mismatch in the Anthropocene [14]. The novel suggests that industrialisation's ecological violence cannot be separated from its cultural violence—the destruction of traditional knowledge systems, the disruption of communal bonds, and the imposition of a mechanistic worldview that reduces living nature to dead resource.

Bakshi [26] reads *Gora* as a sustained meditation on the nature-culture divide, arguing that Tagore's prose functions as an ideological critique, exposing the colonial sleight of hand through which "progress" comes to signify dominion over nature rather than harmonious coexistence within it. The novel's resolution, in which Gora abandons his rigid orthodoxy for a more fluid, embodied relationship with the world, prefigures the deep ecological insight that authentic self-realisation requires identification with the larger community of life [4].

The short story *Kabuliwala* [11] incorporates ecological undertones within its narrative of cross-cultural friendship with notable subtlety. The Afghan trader Rahmun carries within him memories of the Hindu Kush mountains—their snow-covered peaks, alpine flowers, and expansive clear skies—which stand in quiet contrast to the crowded and polluted streets of colonial Calcutta, where he now conducts

his trade. Varghese [18] observes that Tagore's literary imagination frequently invokes natural landscapes as spaces of emotional and spiritual belonging, suggesting that human consciousness remains deeply rooted in the environments from which it originates. In this light, Rahmun's recollections function as a form of ecological memory: despite physical displacement, the migrant continues to bear within his awareness a living connection to the landscapes of his homeland, revealing how memory can preserve bonds with nature even within the confines of an alien urban environment.

The story's emotional climax, in which Rahmun's memories of his distant daughter merge with his affection for Mini, the Bengali child who becomes his surrogate, suggests that an authentic human relationship requires grounding in the living earth. The peddler's tales of mountain flowers are not mere nostalgic ornament but expressions of a worldview in which human affection and ecological attachment cannot be separated. This resonates with ecofeminist emphases on the interconnectedness of all forms of care and the necessity of embedding ethics in embodied, place-based relationships [27].

The Home and the World [9] escalates Tagore's critique of industrial anthropocentrism by exploring the tensions between agrarian idealism and nationalist fervour. The zamindar Nikhilesh embodies a vision of responsible stewardship rooted in intimate knowledge of land and community, while his friend Sandip represents the destructive potential of abstract nationalism divorced from ecological and ethical constraint. The novel's love triangle, involving Nikhilesh's wife, Bimala, serves as a vehicle for exploring the gendered dimensions of these competing worldviews. Parvin Suma [22] reads Bimala's trajectory as emblematic of women's re-embodiment with nature against the abstractions of capitalist modernity—a process through which she must recover her connection to the living earth before she can recover authentic agency.

Tagore's symbolic drama *Red Oleanders* [28] presents perhaps his most explicit indictment of extractive capitalism. Set in the kingdom of Yaksha, where miners toil endlessly to extract wealth for an unseen ruler, the play depicts a landscape stripped of life by the logic of endless accumulation. The oleander flower that blooms amid this desolation becomes a symbol of resilient *Jivan Devata*, the life force that cannot be entirely suppressed even by the most brutal exploitation. Gaard [29] reads this as an instance of what she terms "queer ecology"—the recognition that life finds paths of flourishing that exceed and escape the categories through which power seeks to contain it.

Tagore's essays, particularly those collected in *Creative Unity* [30] and *The Crisis in Civilisation* [31], consolidate

these narrative critiques into philosophical manifestos. He decries "machine-made civilisation" for severing humanity from its "living environment," advocating instead a return to the organic rhythms that once governed human dwelling on earth. His diagnosis of modernity's spiritual crisis anticipates by decades the insights of deep ecology and ecopsychology, particularly Macy's analysis of the psychological dimensions of ecological despair [15]. For Tagore, the industrial worldview is not merely mistaken but pathogenic, producing forms of subjectivity incapable of experiencing the joy and meaning that flow from an authentic relationship with the living world.

Yet Chakrabarty [16] offers an important qualification to celebratory readings of Tagore's environmentalism. While Tagore's critique of industrial modernity is powerful and prophetic, his positive vision remains shaped by the elite reformism of the Bengali *bhadralok* class from which he emerged. The peasants and workers who populate his narratives are often objects of sympathy rather than subjects of their own liberation, their agency circumscribed by the novelist's benevolent gaze. A responsible ecocritical engagement with Tagore must acknowledge these limitations even as it draws inspiration from his vision, recognising that ecological thought must be democratised and radicalised if it is to serve the cause of environmental justice.

Through these diverse prose works, Tagore unmasks the industrial veil that separates modern humanity from the living earth, revealing the violence concealed beneath promises of progress and prosperity. His narratives do not simply describe ecological harm but trace its connections to the deepest structures of modern thought and society—colonialism, capitalism, patriarchy, and the mechanistic worldview that underpins them all. In doing so, they offer not only critique but also the outlines of an alternative: a mode of dwelling on earth grounded in reciprocity, reverence, and the recognition of our profound interdependence with all life.

IV. EDUCATION ROOTED IN EARTH-CONSCIOUSNESS

Santiniketan represents Tagore's most concrete attempt to translate his ecological vision into institutional practice. Founded in 1901 amid the red soil and sal forests of rural Bengal, the ashram-school embodied a radical alternative to the colonial education system that Tagore saw as complicit in the destruction of both Indian culture and the living earth. By rejecting walled classrooms, rote learning, and the separation of knowledge from life, Santiniketan sought to cultivate what Bhattacharya [13] terms "ecological personhood"—a mode of being in which the boundaries

between self and world, human and nature, learner and environment become permeable and fluid.

The physical architecture of Santiniketan enacted this ecological philosophy. Classrooms opened onto verandas that opened onto gardens; students studied under trees rather than within buildings; the boundaries between inside and outside, culture and nature, were deliberately blurred. Sen [32] reads this spatial practice as a form of what might be called "pedagogical bioregionalism": the recognition that authentic learning requires immersion in the particular landscapes in which it occurs. Students at Santiniketan did not simply read about nature; they experienced it directly, their bodies and senses engaged with the soil, the wind, the changing seasons that shaped the world they were learning to understand.

The rituals and festivals that structured life at Santiniketan reinforced this earth-centred orientation. *Brikharopan* (tree-planting festivals) brought students into direct relationship with the arboreal community, their labour of planting and tending becoming a form of embodied learning about interdependence and care. *Varshamangal* celebrated the arrival of the monsoon, its songs and dances expressing gratitude for the rains that sustained life. These practices, as Bhattacharya [13] observes, functioned as what contemporary environmental educators would call "place-based pedagogy": they rooted learning in the specific ecological rhythms of Bengal, cultivating in students a love for and commitment to the landscapes they inhabited.

The curriculum at Santiniketan integrated crafts and arts alongside academic subjects, challenging the hierarchical distinction between mental and manual labour that Tagore saw as central to industrial civilisation's alienation from nature. Students learned pottery from local clay, weaving from local fibres, music from local traditions—practices that embedded them in the materiality of their environment and the cultural heritage of their region. Miles [23] argues that this integration of head, hand, and heart anticipated by decades the insights of experiential education and ecosophy, demonstrating that authentic ecological consciousness cannot be cultivated through abstract instruction alone but requires embodied engagement with the more-than-human world.

Tagore's educational manifestos, particularly *The Crisis in Civilisation* [31], articulate the philosophical foundations of this pedagogical experiment. He diagnoses modern education as a form of "soul-starvation" that severs students from their living environment, reducing knowledge to information and wisdom to technique. The alternative he proposes is not merely a different curriculum but a different mode of relationship between teacher and student, between

human and nature, between self and world. Education, in this vision, becomes a process of "coming home" to the earth, of recovering the intimate connection that industrial civilisation has severed.

Yet Santiniketan was not immune to the contradictions and limitations that plagued Tagore's broader vision. Gupta [25] notes that the institution's curriculum, for all its innovations, remained shaped by the gendered assumptions of its time. While girls were educated alongside boys, the forms of knowledge they were encouraged to pursue often reflected traditional expectations about women's roles. The ecofeminist potential of Tagore's vision, his recognition of the connections between the domination of women and the domination of nature, was only partially realised in the institutional practices of Santiniketan.

Colonial authorities viewed Santiniketan with suspicion, dismissing its educational approach as "unscientific" and its ecological orientation as backwards-looking romanticism. Kumar [33] documents the tensions between Tagore's vision and the demands of the colonial education system, which sought to produce subjects suited to the needs of the empire rather than citizens capable of dwelling harmoniously on earth. These tensions anticipate contemporary debates about the purposes of education in the Anthropocene, as educators grapple with the challenge of preparing students for an uncertain future.

Despite these limitations, Santiniketan stands as a prophetic experiment in earth-centred education, anticipating by decades the principles of place-based learning, environmental education, and ecosophy that would emerge in late twentieth-century pedagogical thought. Its practices—learning under trees, celebrating seasonal festivals, integrating crafts and arts, blurring boundaries between inside and outside—offer models for contemporary educators seeking to cultivate in students the ecological consciousness that our planetary crisis demands. In an age of climate disruption and biodiversity loss, Tagore's living laboratory reminds us that education is never neutral: it either prepares students to perpetuate the destruction of the living earth or equips them to imagine and create alternatives.

V. JIVAN DEVATA AND THE CRITIQUE OF DUALISMS

At the core of Tagore's ecopoetics lies the concept of *Jivan Devata*—the "Lord of Life" or "Life-God" that animates the universe as a living presence. This philosophical principle, elaborated across his essays, lectures, and spiritual writings, provides the metaphysical foundation for his non-anthropocentric vision, positioning human existence within a cosmos suffused with consciousness and value.

In *Sadhana* [34], Tagore articulates *Jivan Devata* as "the infinite personality of the world," a formulation that challenges the Western philosophical tradition's reduction of nature to mere matter awaiting human inscription. For Tagore, the universe is not a collection of inert objects but a living subject, its every aspect participating in the same consciousness that humans experience as their own interiority. This monistic philosophy, drawing on Upanishadic sources while departing from them in significant ways, refuses the fundamental dualisms mind/body, human/nature, culture/wilderness—that have structured Western thought since Descartes [6].

The concept of *Jivan Devata* bears significant affinities with deep ecology's principle of biospherical egalitarianism. Naess [4] argues that the ecological self-matures through identification with the larger community of life, a process that dissolves the boundaries between ego and world. Tagore's *Jivan Devata* names precisely this expanded sense of self, the recognition that the same life that pulses through human veins pulses through the veins of all beings. As he writes in *Personality* [35], "The world is not a mere phenomenon, it is a living presence that speaks to our own living soul."

This philosophical orientation generates a thoroughgoing critique of the mechanistic worldview that Tagore saw as the intellectual foundation of industrial civilisation's assault on nature. In lecture after lecture, he decries the reduction of the living world to dead matter, the quantification of quality, the substitution of calculation for relationship. Bakshi [26] reads this critique as anticipating the phenomenological tradition's insistence on the irreducibility of lived experience to scientific abstraction. Tagore's target is not science as such but scientism—the ideological conviction that the methods of natural science exhaust reality, leaving no room for the qualitative, the relational, the sacred.

Tagore's critique of dualism extends to the gendered hierarchies that ecofeminism has identified as central to Western thought's domination of nature. Plumwood's [6] analysis of the "master model" finds echoes in Tagore's insistence that the separation of reason from emotion, culture from nature, mind from body reflects a pathology of consciousness rather than an accurate description of reality. His frequent association of the divine feminine with the generative powers of earth—Shakti as the creative force of the universe—challenges the patriarchal devaluation of both women and nature that has characterised so much of Western philosophical tradition [22].

The spiritual dimension of Tagore's ecological thought distinguishes it from secular strands of environmental philosophy while connecting it to traditions that insist on

the sacredness of the living world. Radhakrishnan [36] traces the Upanishadic sources of Tagore's vision, noting that his concept of *Jivan Devata* transforms traditional notions of *Atman* and *Brahman* through the lens of modern experience. The result is a philosophy that is simultaneously traditional and innovative, rooted in ancient wisdom while responsive to contemporary challenges.

Yet Chakrabarty [16] cautions against too facile an assimilation of Tagore's thought to contemporary ecological frameworks. His vision, for all its profundity, remains shaped by the historical conditions of its emergence—conditions that differ significantly from our own. The Anthropocene presents challenges—climate change, ocean acidification, mass extinction—that Tagore could not have anticipated and that may require modes of thought and action beyond those his philosophy can provide. A responsible engagement with Tagore's vision must honour its insights while recognising its limits, drawing inspiration from his ecopoetics of harmony while acknowledging that our planetary crisis demands new forms of ecological thought and practice.

Through the concept of *Jivan Devata*, Tagore provides philosophical foundations for a non-anthropocentric ethic that positions humanity within rather than above the community of life. His critique of dualisms challenges the intellectual structures that have legitimised ecological destruction, while his affirmation of cosmic consciousness opens possibilities for relationship and reverence that mechanistic worldviews foreclose. In an age of ecological crisis, these philosophical resources offer guidance for reimagining our place on earth.

VI. TAGORE'S ECOPOETICS IN RELATION TO DEEP ECOLOGY AND ECOFEMINISM

Tagore's ecological vision, while rooted in Indian philosophical traditions and Bengali cultural contexts, engages in productive dialogue with global currents of environmental thought. His affinities with deep ecology and ecofeminism are particularly striking, suggesting that his work can serve as a bridge between Eastern and Western approaches to the environmental crisis.

The deep ecology platform articulated by Naess [4] finds numerous echoes in Tagore's writings. Both emphasise the intrinsic value of all life forms, independent of their utility to human purposes. Both call for an expansion of the self through identification with the larger community of life. Both critique the reduction of quality to quantity and the substitution of technical calculation for experiential wisdom. Murphy [3] argues that Tagore's *Sadhana* can be read as a deep ecology text *avant la lettre*, its meditations on

the unity of life anticipating by decades the philosophical foundations of the deep ecology movement.

Yet significant differences separate Tagore's vision from the deep ecology tradition. Naess's framework, for all its ecological sensitivity, remains shaped by the Western philosophical categories it seeks to transcend. Tagore's thought, drawing on Upanishadic sources, offers a more thoroughgoing critique of the subject-object dichotomy that structures so much of Western metaphysics. Moreover, Tagore's emphasis on aesthetic experience and creative expression distinguishes his approach from the often-ascetic orientation of deep ecology, suggesting that ecological consciousness requires not renunciation but intensified engagement with the beautiful particularity of the living world.

Ecofeminism provides another fruitful point of connection. Gaard's [29] analysis of the connections between the domination of women and the domination of nature resonates with Tagore's frequent association of the feminine with the generative powers of earth. His critique of patriarchal reason and his affirmation of embodied, relational modes of knowing anticipate central themes of ecofeminist thought. Parvin Suma [22] demonstrates that Tagore's female characters often embody a wisdom about nature that their male counterparts lack, their confinement to domestic spaces paradoxically preserving forms of ecological knowledge that modernising males have lost.

Shiva's [27] analysis of the connections among development, patriarchy, and ecological destruction echoes Tagore's critique of industrial civilisation. Both thinkers recognise that the abstraction of nature into resource requires the abstraction of women into objects, that the same logic of domination operates across the domains of gender and ecology. Yet Shiva's emphasis on Third World women's resistance movements represents a political radicalisation that Tagore's elite reformism could not fully embrace. The dialogue between Tagore and ecofeminism thus illuminates both common ground and significant divergence.

Tagore's vision also resonates with indigenous ecological traditions worldwide, suggesting possibilities for cross-cultural solidarity in defence of the living earth. Buell [24] notes the parallels between Santiniketan's earth-centred pedagogy and Native American educational practices that emphasise relationship with place. Varghese [18] highlights that Tagore's persistent use of river imagery reflects a broader cultural understanding of water as a sacred and life-sustaining force found in many traditions worldwide. Through these symbolic associations, Tagore's ecopoetic vision can be seen as part of a wider intellectual and cultural movement that challenges the uniform and exploitative logic of industrial modernity. By drawing upon diverse

cultural insights while emphasizing reverence for nature, this perspective underscores a shared global sensibility that regards the living earth as inherently valuable and spiritually significant.

Yet decolonial critiques caution against too facile a celebration of these cross-cultural connections. Chakrabarty [16] insists that the universalisation of particular traditions risks erasing the specific histories and struggles that shape them. Tagore's thought, for all its global reach, emerges from specific colonial and postcolonial conditions that differ significantly from those shaping indigenous ecologies in the Americas, Africa, or Oceania. A responsible global ecology must honour these differences even as it seeks common ground, recognising that solidarity across cultures requires not the erasure of particularity but its respectful acknowledgement.

Through these global dialogues, Tagore's ecopoetics of harmony emerges as a resource for environmental thought worldwide. His vision offers philosophical depth, aesthetic richness, and spiritual insight that can enrich and challenge ecological thinking across cultural boundaries. In an age of planetary crisis, such cross-cultural dialogue is not a luxury but a necessity, as humanity seeks the wisdom and inspiration to imagine and create a more harmonious mode of dwelling on earth.

VII. CONCLUSION

This review article has traversed the vast terrain of Rabindranath Tagore's literary and philosophical oeuvre, tracing the contours of an ecopoetics that positions the Earth as a living, conscious entity with which humanity exists in a relationship of mutual reverence and spiritual interdependence. Through close analysis of his poetry, prose, educational experiments, and philosophical writings, we have demonstrated that Tagore's vision is fundamentally non-anthropocentric, refusing the subject-object dichotomy that has structured Western thought since Descartes and legitimating the exploitation of the more-than-human world.

The poetry of *Gitanjali* and selected verses reveals a sensibility for which rivers, trees, birds, and seasons are not mere backdrops to human drama but active participants in a cosmic conversation. Tagore's formal innovations—his flowing enjambments, his sonic textures that mimic natural sounds—enact the very ecological attunement they describe, training readers in modes of perception that modern civilisation has taught them to forget. The child gazing into the pond in "Balai" and the birds migrating across borders in "Dui Pakhi" become figures for a relationship with nature grounded not in mastery but in mutuality, not in extraction but in erotic reciprocity.

The prose narratives amplify these poetic intuitions into sustained critiques of industrial modernity's assault on the living earth. *Gora*, "Kabuliwala," *The Home and the World*, and *Red Oleanders* expose the connections between colonial extraction, capitalist accumulation, and the spiritual alienation of modern humanity. Tagore's fiction reveals that ecological violence cannot be separated from cultural violence—the destruction of traditional knowledge, the disruption of communal bonds, the imposition of a mechanistic worldview that reduces living nature to dead resource.

Santiniketan translates this critique into institutional practice, demonstrating that education can cultivate ecological personhood rather than severing students from their living environment. The open-air classrooms, the seasonal festivals, the integration of crafts and arts, the blurring of boundaries between inside and outside—these practices offer models for contemporary educators seeking to prepare students for life in the Anthropocene. Santiniketan's limitations remind us that institutional transformation requires ongoing struggle, that even the most prophetic vision can be compromised by the social conditions of its emergence.

The philosophical concept of *Jivan Devata* provides metaphysical foundations for this ecological vision, articulating a cosmos suffused with consciousness and value. Tagore's critique of dualisms—mind/body, human/nature, culture/wilderness—challenges the intellectual structures that have legitimated ecological destruction, while his affirmation of cosmic consciousness opens possibilities for relationship and reverence that mechanistic worldviews foreclose. His affinities with deep ecology and ecofeminism suggest that his work can serve as a bridge between Eastern and Western approaches to the environmental crisis, while his differences from these traditions remind us of the irreducible particularity of cultural expression.

Tagore's ecopoetics of harmony speaks with urgent relevance to our present moment of ecological crisis. As biodiversity collapses, as climate systems destabilise, as the web of life frays under the pressure of human activity, his vision offers resources for reimagining our place on earth. He reminds us that the environmental crisis is at root a crisis of consciousness—a failure of perception, relationship, and reverence that no amount of technological innovation can remedy. The solution, his work suggests, lies not in more efficient domination but in more attentive relationship, not in mastery but in mutuality, not in extraction but in erotic reciprocity with the living world.

The promise of harmony that Tagore's ecopoetics holds out is not a return to some imagined prelapsarian state but a

movement forward into more conscious, more responsible modes of dwelling. It is a harmony that acknowledges conflict and loss, that recognises the tragic dimensions of existence even as it affirms the beauty and wonder of the living world. It is a harmony that honours difference even as it seeks connection, that respects the otherness of the more-than-human even as it recognises our profound kinship with all life.

In the end, Tagore's vision challenges us to become fully human by becoming fully earthly—to recognise that our humanity is not diminished but enlarged by relationship with the more-than-human world. The ecopoetics of harmony that he articulated across half a century of creative work remains a living resource for all who seek to imagine and create a future in which both humanity and the living earth might flourish. His songs of the earth call us to listen, to respond, to join our voices to the planetary chorus—and in that joining, to discover the joy and meaning that flow from an authentic relationship with the living world.

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